

CLARK'S LOOKOUT STATE PARK COUNTY ROAD IMPROVEMENT PROJECT DECISION NOTICE

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
1400 S. 19th Avenue
Bozeman, MT 59718

October 4, 2005

Description of the Proposed Action:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposes to contribute up to \$25,000 to Beaverhead County towards paving a section (875 feet) of Lovers Leap South County Road (#315D) and constructing a small vehicle turnout on the south side of the road adjacent to a side channel of the Beaverhead River within Clark's Lookout State Park. Beaverhead County possesses a right-of-way easement for the road through Clark's Lookout State Park. Beaverhead County or their contractors will conduct all paving and widening work within this easement.

Public Comment:

Public notification of the availability of an Environmental Assessment (EA) evaluating this proposed action was published in the Helena Independent Record, the Butte Montana Standard and the Dillon Tribune newspapers and on the FWP website. In addition, neighbors to Clark's Lookout State Park and other known interested individuals, agencies and organizations were sent copies of the EA.

Two public comments were received concerning this draft EA during a comment period running from August 30 through September 28, 2005.

The first comment was supportive of the proposed action. The commenter felt that State Parks should contribute to the paving of the County road and that by doing so the experience of visitors would be significantly enhanced.

FWP response to supportive comment on the proposed action: So noted.

The second commenter opposed State Parks contributing towards the paving of the County Road. This commenter felt that the responsibility for paving the road should lie with the developer who initiated the subdivision at the end of the county road and Beaverhead County who permitted and approved that subdivision.

FWP response to opposition comment on proposed action: Traffic on Lovers Leap Road, whether generated by subdivision homeowners or by other residences along this county road, negatively impact users of Clark's Lookout State Park. FWP feels that the negotiated cost share agreement to paving Lovers Leap Road is a reasonable and fair approach to mitigating road noise and dust that impact users of the state park. The negotiated agreement also will

provide a turnout along the road within the park for river users to safely park and access the Beaverhead River. This river access feature does not currently exist. Total cost of the project is \$87,250. FWP's share amounts to 29% of the total cost. Beaverhead County and the developer will share the other 71% of project costs. FWP believes this is a fair allocation of the paving costs.

FWP has routinely participated with a number of Montana counties to assist with road projects on county roads leading to and through state parks where significant benefits to parks visitors could be realized. This includes road projects with Carbon County at Cooney State Park, Cascade County at Ulm Pishkun State Park, Deerlodge County at Lost Creek State Park, Garfield County at Hell Creek State Park, and Missoula County at Beavertail Hill State Park. Montana State Parks have assisted Beaverhead County with funding to improve county connecting roads leading to Bannack State Park and Clark's Lookout State Park (Lovers Leap Road North) in recent years.

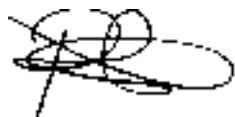
Decision:

Based on analyses in the Draft EA, and comments on the proposed action, I find that contribution of up to \$25,000 towards the paving the Lovers Leap County Road and development of the river access turnout within the state park is the appropriate alternative for Fish, Wildlife & Parks to implement. It is consistent with county road cooperation that has occurred throughout the state in the Parks Program. It is also a fair reflection of the benefits accrued to Clark's Lookout State Park as a result of the proposed development. I have evaluated the draft document and applicable laws, regulations, and policies, and have determined that this action will not have a significant effect on the human or natural environment. The completed environmental assessment is an appropriate level of analysis to identify and address all significant issues associated with this project. For this reason, an Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared.

There are no modifications to the Draft Environmental Assessment. The Draft Environmental Assessment, together with the Decision Notice, will serve as the final document for this proposal.

The Final EA and the Decision Notice for this project is available from Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Region Three Headquarters, 1400 S. 19th Avenue, Bozeman, MT 59718, or online at: <http://www.fwp.mt.gov/publicnotices>.

Please direct all inquiries to FWP Region Three Headquarters c/o Clark's Lookout State Park County Road Improvement Project EA, at the address provided above.



Patrick J. Flowers
Region Three Supervisor